

CLAIMS

1. Apparatus for packaging elongate members, the apparatus comprising: a frame comprising a base and side members; at least one packing member engageable with the frame, the packing member having a deformable portion for engaging elongate members to be handled; and means for retaining the packing member in contact with the elongate members.

2. The apparatus of claim 1, wherein the packing member comprises a cross-member for extending between the frame side members.

3. The apparatus of claim 1 or 2, wherein at least two packing members are provided.

4. The apparatus of claim 3, wherein, in use, a packing member overlies and underlies each elongate member.

5. The apparatus of any of the preceding claims, wherein the deformable portion of the packing member is resilient.

6. The apparatus of any of the preceding claims, wherein the frame is generally U-shaped.

7. The apparatus of any of the preceding claims, wherein

two frames are provided, one for location towards each end of the elongate members.

8. The apparatus of claim 7, wherein the frames are joined by at least one rigid connector member.

5 9. The apparatus of claim 8, wherein two connector members are provided and with the base members of the frames create a generally rectangular base frame.

10. The apparatus of claim 8 or 9, wherein the connecting member between the two end frames has forklift protector plates to facilitate handling of the apparatus.

11. The apparatus of any of the preceding claims, wherein the packing member is adapted to be positioned at different heights within the frame.

12. The apparatus of any of the preceding claims, wherein the packing member is restrained against movement parallel and perpendicular to the length of the constrained elongate members.

13. The apparatus of claim 12, wherein the packing member ends engage profiles on the side members.

20 14. The apparatus of claim 13, wherein the packing member ends define rigid heads for location in channels defined by

the side members.

15. The apparatus of claim 14, wherein the heads are
slidable in the channels.

16. The apparatus of any of the preceding claims, wherein the retaining means is adapted to pull an upper packing member towards the base.

17. The apparatus of claim 16, wherein the retaining means comprises a mechanical tightening arrangement.

18. The apparatus of any of the preceding claims, wherein the retaining means comprises flexible members adapted to be draped over an uppermost packing member.

19. The apparatus of any of the preceding claims, wherein the packing member comprises a rigid section.

20. The apparatus of claim 19, wherein the packing member comprises a rigid centre section.

21. The apparatus of claim 19 or 20, wherein one or more deformable elements is fixed to the rigid section.

22. The apparatus of claim 21, wherein ~~the~~ the deformable element is in the form of an elastomeric jacket.

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23. The apparatus of claim 22, wherein the elastomer
jacket defines vertical profiles on either side of the
rigid section shaped to facilitate elastomer displacement
with increasing vertical compression.

5 24. The apparatus of claim 23, wherein the elastomer
jacket defines displaceable lobes, upper and lower lobes, on
each side of the jacket ^{and} being relatively vertically
movable.

25. The apparatus of claim 24, wherein the elastomer
jacket defines side lobes and a central section, with one
or more channels between the central section and the side
lobes.

15 26. The apparatus of any of claims 22 to 25, wherein the
elastomer jacket defines angular edges that are adapted to
exert increasing compressive resistance to elongate member
lateral motion with increasing applied vertical force.

27. A method of packaging elongate members, the method
comprising:

20 providing a frame comprising a base and side members;

providing at least one packing member having a
deformable portion;

locating the packing member in the frame;

locating elongate members in the frame; and

securing the packing member with the deformable

portion in contact with the elongate members.

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28. The method of claim 27, further comprising providing more than one packing member and locating the packing members and elongate members in the frame such that a packing member overlies and underlies each elongate member.

29. The method of claim 27 or 28, wherein two frames are provided, one for location towards each end of the elongate members.

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